border terrorism against India and of the growing nexus between Pakistan's official institutions and agencies and terrorist groups based in Pakistan and Afghanistan including the terrorist group led by Osama Bin Laden which is reported to have called for 'Jehad' against India. India has played a leading role in strengthening international consensus against terrorism in the UN, NAM, CHOGM and SAARC fora.

As a result of these efforts, there is greater international awareness and determination to combat terrorism. The UNSC adopted Resolution 1267 on October 15, 1999 imposing sanctions against the Taliban until Osama Bin Laden is brought to justice.

Collection of Relief for Orissa Cyclone Victims by Indian Embassy in USA

1571. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Embassy in U.S.A. had distanced itself in collecting and coordinating the relief for victims of Orissa cyclone;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether any directive has been issued by Government to Indian Embassy in U.S.A. for coordinating in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) In accordance with Government directives, the Indian Embassy in Washington took several immediate measures to provide assistance for collection of relief for the victims of Orissa cyclone. A senior officer in the Embassy was designated as the Co-ordinating Officer. Information regarding channelising funds to Prime Minister's Relief Fund and other Relief Funds were put on the Embassy Website on a daily basis. An on-line Charity Organisation, I-Charity, was introduced to the Indian Community, which worked out an arrangement for seeking contributions through the Internet. Arrangements for airlifting of relief supplies by Air India have been publicised. The Embassy and the Consultates have also undertaken to

receive relief supplies and hand them over to Air India for onward shipment. Cheques received for the Prime Minister's Relief Fund are being forwarded to the appropriate authorities. The Embassy also provided assistance to the Indian Community and other in organising a Charity Cultural Show.

Clearance of pending applications for Passports

1572. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large number of passport applications are pending in all the Regional Passport Offices of the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, regional office-wise separately and reasons for delay in issuing the passport; and

(c) the steps proposed by Government to clear the pending application?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A passport is normally issued within five weeks (as police verification takes about 4 weeks) provided the application is accurately filled with all the required documents and a clear police verification report has been received. Any application, on which a passport is not issued within five weeks by a Passport Office, where all the requirements have been met is considered pending with the Passport Office. A statement showing the number of applications where passports have not been issued for over five weeks either due to the non-availability of police verification report or awaiting issue at the Passport Offices as on 8 December, 1999 is enclosed in the statement (*See* below)

The main reason for delay in issue of passports is the delay in receipt of police verification reports. The other reason is the increase in volume of work in Passport Offices without a corresponding increase of staff in the Central Passport Organisation. In many cases passports cannot be issued due to receipt of negative or incomplete reports from police authorities, discrepancies in documents submitted by the applicants and lack of response from applicants who are asked to submit additional documents.